

CARIES OF BONE, AND MEDICINAL TREATMENT VERSUS OPERATION.

To the Editor of the HOMEOPATHIC WORLD.

SIR,—Dr. Cooper's remarks *re Silica* in the treatment of bone caries are valuable, and, as I suppose that carious bone wherever it occurs has the same ground so far as therapeutics are concerned, I venture to give my experience in those cases which have come before me, these being diseases of bone forming joints, or in the neighbourhood of joints. I have no experience in the special cases in which Dr. Cooper is most often concerned—those of mastoid disease—but I imagine that the primary cause of that disease is, like that of joint troubles, tuberculous deposit and subsequent suppuration. I have given *Silica*, *Silicon Fluoride*, *Calcium Fluoride*, and *Phosphorus* in joint diseases, and I think that the *Calcium Fluoride* has proved the most useful of the four ; but these are cases which, if left to time, rest to the joint, and proper hygienic and dietetic treatment, tend usually to a natural recovery, sooner or later, and it is not easy to ascertain how far drugs have helped in the recovery. I am also not able to trace the homeopathicity of at least *Silica* and *Calcium*, or the *Fluorides* to bone caries ; though there is more evidence for their influence upon tubercular disease. I would suggest that it is the tubercle we should treat, and not merely the suppurative process.

With regard to the question of operation, I see that Dr. Cooper approves of the removal of sequestra by surgical operation, and I suppose that it is with this object that surgeons

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operate in mastoid disease ; caries here being specially liable to give very "sequestered sequestra," and the existence of a seques-trum here would surely act as a serious mechanical obstacle to recovery, whatever the drugs used. But I quite agree that we homeopaths should be more averse to surgical operation than are the allopaths ; if we are not so, we lose one great opportunity of proving the superiority of our therapeutic method, and the enemy, very justly, can use the point against us. In these cases, or at least in those of joint troubles, which I have more to do with, the opinion is gaining ground that excisions and erasions do not give much better results than does time, rest, and general hygienic care, and all surgeons are getting more conservative in the matter.

Antiseptic methods have been for some time causing a tendency to operate rather too freely, without regard to the final result ; let our homeopathic surgeons, at any rate, be the most careful how they operate.

Dr. Cooper mentions the comparative remuneration and praise given to operations and medicinal treatment. I venture to doubt if a long-continued attendance for the medicinal treatment of such a disease as bone caries would cost the patient less than the more rapid method of the removal of the bone by operation. Medicinal treatment occupies months, that of operation only a few weeks or days.

And, supposing that the patient makes a more rapid recovery by operation, I think that there is no ground for the complaint that less gratitude is expressed for the less rapid recovery under drug treatment. The man who gets his patient well in the shortest time deserves the most praise ; but if Dr. Cooper can prove that operation retards or prevents recovery, his opposition to it is amply established as just.—Yours, &c., GERARD SMITH.

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